

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NOUAKC 01098 132015Z

63

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 EB-11 OMB-01

TRSE-00 COME-00 DRC-01 /187 W
----- 114609

R 121500Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1690

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1098

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR FR MR

SUBJ: IMPROVED FRENCH-MAURITANIAN TIES --DENIAU VISIT

SUMMARY: VISIT HERE BY GOF SECSTATE FONAFFAIRS (COOPERATION)
HAS HELPED TAKE YEAR-LONG CHILL OFF FRENCH-MAURITANIAN RE-
LATIONS.

1. NOV 1-3 VISIT TO MAURITANIA BY JEAN-FRANCOIS DENIAU HAS
WARMED PARIS-NOUAKCHOTT RELATIONS, ACCORDING TO FRENCH
AMBASSADOR GAUTHIER WHO REVIEWED WITH ME GENESIS AND RESULTS
OF DENIAU VISIT. GAUTHIER, SAID HE HAD RECOMMENDED VISIT AS
WAY TO END UNCOMFORTABLE STALEMATE IN BILATERAL TIES WHICH
NEITHER SIDE WISHED SEE CONTINUE. NOTED PARIS
HAD DECIDED IT WAS READY TO UNBLOCK CERTAIN
AID PROJECTS STUCK IN PIPELINE FOR PAST EIGHTEEN MONTHS.
WHILE GIRM WAS INTERESTED IN RESUMING AID RELATIONSHIP
IT HAD BEEN RELUCTANT TO INITIATE ANY AID REQUESTS FOR FEAR
OF BEING REBUFFED. DENIAU'S VISIT WAS INITIALLY BILLED
AS PRIVATE, I.E. AS DENIAU'S RETURN TO CAPITAL WHERE HE
HAD ONCE SERVED AS AMBASSADOR. VISIT QUICKLY ASSUMED,
HOWEVER, ALL TRAPPINGS OF OFFICIAL VISIT INCLUD-
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PAGE 02 NOUAKC 01098 132015Z

ING EXTENDED MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH

AND PRINCIPAL CABINET MEMBERS.

2. AFTER TAKING HIS OWN READING OF POLITICAL CLIMATE DENIAU ADVISED MAURITANIANS THAT FRANCE WAS PREPARED TO SIGN AGREEMENTS IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS TOTALLING SOME DOLS 2.3 MILLION. ALL WERE PROJECTS WHICH HAD BEEN TENTATIVELY APPROVED PRIOR TO JUNE 1972 WHEN GIRM ANNOUNCED DECISION TO SEEK REVISION OF FRANCO-MAURITANIAN ACCORDS.

3. ACCORDING GAUTHIER, DENIAU VISIT ENCOURAGED GIRM TO TABLE SEVERAL NEW AID REQUESTS. THESE INCLUDED CONSTRUCTION OF BOUTILIMIT-KIFFA PORTION OF NOUAKCHOTT-NEMA CROSS-COUNTRY HIGHWAY, ON WHICH FAC HAS ALREADY DONE ENGINEERING DESIGN. ALSO PROMINENT ON SHOPPING LIST IS OULD DADDAH'S PET PROJECT OF MEAT PACKING PLANT AND TANNERY FOR AIOUN, CAPITAL OF SECOND REGION. DENIAU RESPONDED IN ALL CASES THAT HE COULD MAKE NO COMMITMENT OTHER THAN "TO AGREE TO STUDY". (IN THIS COUNTRY SUCH AN ANSWER IS ROUTINELY AND OFTEN ERRONEOUSLY TAKEN AS INDICATING HIGH INTEREST). GAUTHIER COMMENTED ONLY THAT NO EARLY DECISIONS LIKELY, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE SEVERAL NEW REQUESTED PROJECTS SEEM NOT YET FULLY CORDINATED WITHIN GIRM. AS A FIRST STEP LOCAL FAC MISSION DIRECTOR WILL BE CONSULTING WITH CABINET MINISTERS CONCERNED DURING COMING WEEKS TO ESTABLISH GIRM'S PRIORITY NEEDS.

4. COMMENT: EXTENDED PERIOD OF 1972 NEGOTIATIONS ON ACCORDS LEFT BRUISED FEELING IN BOTH CAPITALS .MALAISE PERSISTED AFTER SIGNATURE OF NEW ACCORDS IN FEBRUARY AS WITNESSED BY GIRM'S STRIPPING FRENCH AMBASSADOR OF DEANSHIP DIPLOMATIC CORPS ONE MONTH BEFORE HIS SCHEDULED DEPARTURE LAST MARCH. PARI DELAYED NAMING NEW AMBASSADOR FOR SIX MONTHS TO UNDERLINE ITS DISPLEASURE AND VARIOUS FRENCH OFFICIALS HERE LAST SPRING FREELY COMMENTED THAT MEURITANIA MUST BE TAUGHT LESSON IN WAY WHICH WOULD DISCOURAGE OTHERS FROM FOLLOWING IT OUT OF FRANC ZONE. AS ITS PRINCIPAL SANCTION PARIS CHOSE TO FREEZE AID RELATIONS, OR, AS IT WAS DELICATELY PHRASED, TO PUT MAURITANIA ON "CLASSIC" BASIS AS

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NOUAKC 01098 132015Z

AID RECIPIENT WHOSE REQUESTS WOULD BE REVIEWED ON "CASE BY CASE BASIS".

5. KNOWLEDGABLE MAURITANIANS ARE SCEPTICAL THAT DENIAU'S VISIT WILL MARK RETURN OF FRANCO-MAURITANIAN AID RELATIONS TO THEIR STATUS QUO ANTE. HOWEVER, GIRM UNIFORMLY WELCOMES DENIAU'S DECISION TO UNBLOCK AID PROJECTS AS DEFINITE INDICATION THAT RELATIONS, BOTH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL, SHOULD VISIBLY IMPROVE

OVER THEIR NADIR OF LAST MARCH. THIS PAST YEAR OF ESTRANGEMENT FROM FRANCE HAS CAUSED SOME DISCOMFORT TO GIRM, DESPITE FACT IT WAS IT'S BRUSK DEMAND FOR ACCORDS REVISION WHICH LED DIRECTLY TO THE SUBSEQUENT FRICTIONS.

6. FOR THEIR PART, THE FRENCH HAVE FOUND TEACHING MAURITANIA A LESSON NOT SO EASY AS THEY MAY HAVE ANTICIPATED. IN ADVANCE OF NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ACCORDS GIRM'S LEADERSHIP HAD KNIT TIES OF FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT WITH OTHER POTENTIAL DONORS, PARTICULARLY THE OIL RICH ARABS. (THIS SOURCE OF FINANCING REMAINS LARGELY POTENTIAL; THERE HAVE BEEN MORE ARAB PROMISES THAN ACTIONS TO DATE IN FINANCING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HERE). HOWEVER, GIVEN NOUAKCHOTT'S LIMITED ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITY TO ABSORB FOREIGN AID AND PROBABLE FRENCH DESIRE TO IMPROVE AID RELATIONS BUT NOT AT FORMER LEVEL, FRANCE WILL NOT FIND A MORE FORTHCOMING RELATIONSHIP UNDULY EXPENSIVE. FRANCE SHOULD BE ABLE TO RECREATE THE APPEARANCE, AND SOME SUBSTANCE, OF HELPFULNESS WITHOUT INVESTING SIGNIFICANT SUMS. THE CRUSTY OUTLOOK OF LOCAL FAC REPRESENTATIVES MAY ALSO SLOW DOWN DEVELOPMENT OF ANY NEW FRENCH AID PROGRAM.
MURPHY

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